

REMARKS

The specification has been amended to update the status of the U.S. Patent Applications that were listed by serial number in the originally filed application. Claims 18, 29 and 30 have been amended to correct informalities. It is noted for the record that the amendments to the specification and claims are non-narrowing amendments. No new matter has been added. Claims 18-30 are pending in this application.

Objection to the Specification

The disclosure was objected to with respect to the listing of patent application serial numbers throughout the specification. The specification has been amended, specifically on pages 1, 6 and 8-10, to recite the patent numbers for those applications that have issued, and to identify applications that have been abandoned. Applicants request that this objection be withdrawn.

Claim Objection

Claims 29 and 30 were objected to with respect to the phrase "a water-dispersible binder." Claims 29 and 30 have been amended to recite "the water-dispersible binder." Applicants request that this objection be withdrawn.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 18-30 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, 2nd paragraph, as being indefinite. The Office Action asserts that independent claim 18 recites a "substrate" in the preamble but does not identify that the "web" in the body of the claim is, in fact, the substrate. Applicants note that the Office Action lists claims 1 and 17 in this rejection; however, it is assumed that both of these should refer to independent claim 18.

The rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. § 112, 2nd paragraph has been obviated by appropriate amendment. Independent claim 18 has been amended to recite that the hydrophobic web is the substrate. Accordingly, the claims fully meet the requirements of 35 U.S.C. § 112, and Applicants request that this rejection be withdrawn.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 18, 22, 25, 26 and 28-30 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over Gordon et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 5,763,332). The Office Action asserts that Gordon et al. discloses an apparatus comprising a source of a substrate including a hydrophobic web and a water-dispersible binder, a pair of press rolls, and a solution applicator for an aqueous wetting solution, such that a web can be made to have a moisture add-on of at least 25%.

The rejection of the claims as anticipated by Gordon et al. is respectfully traversed. The applied reference does not disclose each and every element of the claims. Specifically, Gordon et al. does not disclose a water-dispersible binder in combination with a hydrophobic web, nor does Gordon et al. disclose an aqueous wetting solution that is delivered to a web. Applicants respectfully disagree with the Office Action's interpretation of the disclosure of Gordon et al.

With respect to the combination of a water-dispersible binder and a hydrophobic substrate, Applicants respectfully point out that the Office Action has cited two distinct sections within the Gordon et al. reference. The section from col. 6, line 55 through col. 7, line 21 discloses fibrous basesheet regions that are hydrophobic (see col. 6, line 63 – col. 7, line 1). Within the disclosure of hydrophobic regions, there is no mention of any water-dispersible binders. In contrast, the section at col. 10, lines 6-57 discloses fibrous basesheet regions that are hydrophilic (see col. 8, lines 24-26). The primary binder for these regions is actually a wet strength resin, which reduces the tendency of the fibers to disperse in water (col. 10, lines 6-24). Although water soluble starch is disclosed as an additive for lint control and dry strength improvement, it is clearly stated that the

starch is added at "low levels" (col. 10, lines 54-65). Thus, the overall binder would have the wet strength properties of a wet strength resin, providing for a web that is not water-dispersible. Even if the disclosure of col. 10 of Gordon et al. was incorrectly assumed to disclose a water-dispersible binder, this disclosure is not related to a hydrophobic web, but to a hydrophilic web. Thus, Gordon et al. does not disclose, teach or suggest a hydrophobic web comprising a water-dispersible binder.

With respect to the aqueous wetting solution, Applicants respectfully point out that the Gordon et al. reference does not disclose the delivery of an aqueous solution to the web, but rather discloses an emulsion in which the exterior continuous phase is a lipid phase (col. 11, lines 62-65). Specifically, Gordon et al. discloses an exterior continuous phase containing a "waxy lipid material" (col. 12, lines 18-19). Although the emulsion contains a polar phase that may be aqueous, this polar phase is the internal phase dispersed throughout the lipid phase (col. 13, lines 51-55), and is only exposed when a shear force is applied to the final product (col. 12, lines 1-4, 8-11). Even if the emulsion of Gordon et al. was incorrectly correlated with an aqueous wetting solution, this emulsion is disclosed only as being coated onto a web, and not as being absorbed by the web. See, for example, col. 19, lines 1-4; col. 21, lines 63-65; and throughout the Examples section (col. 21-26). Thus, Gordon et al. does not disclose, teach or suggest the delivery of an aqueous wetting solution that can be absorbed at an add-on of at least about 25%.

Gordon et al. does not disclose an apparatus that includes a source of a hydrophobic web substrate comprising a water-dispersible binder. The reference also does not disclose an aqueous wetting solution, nor does it disclose the absorption of an aqueous wetting solution by the web. Accordingly, Claims 18, 22, 25, 26 and 28-30 are not anticipated by Gordon et al., as the reference does not disclose each and every element of the claims. Applicants request that this rejection be withdrawn.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Gordon et al. in view of Bolton et al.

Claims 19 and 20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Gordon et al. in view of Bolton et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 4,447,924). The Office Action asserts that Bolton et al. discloses the use of a spray boom or drool bar for solution application, and that the combination of these with the apparatus of Gordon et al. would provide the apparatus as claimed.

The rejection of the claims over Gordon et al. in view of Bolton et al. is respectfully traversed. The cited references, alone or in combination, do not teach or suggest each and every element of the claims. Specifically, the references do not teach or suggest a source of a hydrophobic web comprising a water-dispersible binder. As noted above, Gordon et al. does not disclose, teach or suggest a hydrophobic web comprising a water-dispersible binder. As noted in the Amendment and Request for Reconsideration filed February 17, 2004 (p. 8, 1st full paragraph), Bolton et al. does not disclose, teach or suggest a hydrophobic web comprising a water-dispersible binder. Rather, the reference discloses cotton-based woven fabric webs that readily absorb large amounts of water. Accordingly, claims 19 and 20 are not obvious over Gordon et al. and Bolton et al., alone or in combination. Applicants respectfully request that this rejection be withdrawn.

Gordon et al. in view of Bafford et al.

Claims 21 and 27 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Gordon et al. in view of Bafford et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 5,089,296). The Office Action asserts that Bafford et al. discloses the use of a fluid distribution header or die slot for solution application, and discloses the application of wetting solution directly to a web. The Office Action further asserts that the combination of these aspects with the apparatus of Gordon et al. would provide the apparatus as claimed.

The rejection of the claims over Gordon et al. in view of Bafford et al. is respectfully traversed. The cited references, alone or in combination, do not teach or suggest each and every element of the claims. Specifically, the references do not teach or suggest a source of a hydrophobic web comprising a water-dispersible binder. As noted above, Gordon et al. does not disclose, teach or suggest a hydrophobic web comprising a water-dispersible binder. As noted in the Amendment and Request for Reconsideration filed February 17, 2004 (p. 9, 1st partial paragraph), Bafford et al. does not disclose, teach or suggest a hydrophobic web comprising a water-dispersible binder. Rather, the reference discloses conventional paper webs such as unbleached kraft. Accordingly, claims 21 and 27 are not obvious over Gordon et al. and Bafford et al., alone or in combination. Applicants respectfully request that this rejection be withdrawn.

Gordon et al.

Claims 23 and 24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Gordon et al. The Office Action asserts that it would be obvious to vary the gap between the rolls and/or the hardness of the roll covering through routine experimentation, and that these variations would provide the apparatus as claimed.

The rejection of the claims over Gordon et al. is respectfully traversed, as the reference does not teach or suggest each and every element of the claims. Claims 23 and 24 depend from independent claim 18, and thus include the recitations of a source of a hydrophobic web comprising a water-dispersible binder and of the delivery of an aqueous wetting solution. As noted above, Gordon et al. does not disclose, teach or suggest a hydrophobic web comprising a water-dispersible binder, nor does the reference disclose, teach or suggest the delivery of an aqueous wetting solution. Accordingly, claims 23 and 24 are not obvious over Gordon et al. Applicants respectfully request that this rejection be withdrawn.


Conclusion

In conclusion, all of the grounds raised in the outstanding Office Action for rejecting the application are believed to be overcome or rendered moot based on the remarks above. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that all of the presently presented claims are in form for allowance, and such action is requested in due course. Should the Examiner feel a discussion would expedite the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is kindly invited to contact the undersigned.

Also submitted at this time is a Petition for Extension of Time for two (2) months.

Respectfully submitted,

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